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THE LIFE AND CAREER OF *SHAYKH* TALHA B. JA'FAR (c. 1853-1936)*

Hussein Ahmed

Islam in Wällo, as in the rest of Ethiopia, had a chequered but long history. Oral traditions assert that its earliest penetration into the region took place between the late ninth and twelfth/thirteenth century. Islam seems to have been definitely well established by the time of the emergence of the Muslim State of Ifat which had supplanted the "sultanate of Šäwa" in the late thirteenth century. According to oral sources, Islam was brought to the region by the '*ulamā*' of Ifat.¹ It may be assumed (for lack of written evidence and reliable historical traditions about Islamization) that Islam gradually expanded into southeastern Wällo through the activities of foreign and indigenous clerics and traders. However, it does not seem to have sufficiently progressed as to affect the traditional social and religious life of the local people until the sixteenth century.

The conquest of the mediaeval province of Amhara by the forces of Grañ in 1533 marked another stage in the consolidation of Islam in the region. During and after the conquest, a number of Muslim preachers settled in the area to propagate the religion among the local people² who consisted of the Amhara of northern and western highland Wällo, the Agäw, other Kushitic groups long domiciled along Wällo's eastern frontier such as the Afar, and the Argobba in the southeast.³

The process of the steady expansion of Islam was, however, disrupted for a time by the Oromo incursions and, as a consequence, the indigenous Muslim communities were isolated from Ifat and other Muslim centres of the country. In spite of this temporary setback, the conversion of the Oromo settlers themselves to Islam-according to one spurious tradition, they were converted by a certain Arab called "Debelo"⁴ - further accelerated the pace of Islamization since the Wällo Muslim chiefs gradually became ardent champions of the religion, thus changing "...the status of local Islam from that of a religion of disparate communities to that of a dynastic ideology relevant to the entire region."⁵

From the time of the conversion of the Wällo Oromo in the seventeenth century until the revival of Islam in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, Islam in the region was characterized by its further expansion, the patronage of Muslim clerics by the local chiefs, the impetus that the consolidation of the power of these chiefs gave to the dissemination of Islam, and the close interdependence which existed between Islam and dynastic rule.⁶

Two major external factors had a marked impact on the rise of eminent and influential Muslim religious leaders and militant scholars in Wällo during the course of the nineteenth century. There was first of all the resurgence of Islam in the region which manifested itself in the introduction and expansion of the religious orders (*turuq*; sing.: *tarīqa*)⁷ and the revival of trade in the Red Sea basin and adjacent areas

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of Arabia.⁸ This was further reinforced by the visits of Ethiopian Muslims to the Hijāz and neighbouring areas both for pilgrimage and advanced religious training which brought them into contact with the initiators of contemporary trends in Islamic religious and intellectual development. Such contacts sharpened the visitors' awareness of the prevalence, at the popular level, of certain practices which did not conform to orthodox Islam such as the drinking of wine, offering of sacrifices, and the laxity shown by ordinary people in fulfilling their religious obligations.⁹ They also provided them with the ideological framework within which they could envisage and work out a programme of reform as well as justify its implementation with considerable popular support.

Internally, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there flourished in Wällo a number of local Muslim dynasties the most important of which was that based in Wärra Himāno. Its rulers patronized scholars and were committed to the expansion of Islam.¹⁰ At the same time the policy of centralization and unification of the Ethiopian Empire pursued especially by Emperor Yohannes IV (r. 1872-1889), who perceived Islam as an obstacle to the implementation of such a policy, led to local Muslim reactions which included both the appeal to Islamic solidarity and the use of force.

The life and achievements of *Shaykh* Talha should therefore be seen in the context of these salient factors which not only sustained the momentum of what was in essence a religiously-inspired movement, but also determined its character, objectives and duration. Of course, the movement also reflected deeper socio-economic grievances.¹¹

Islam in nineteenth-century Wällo was in a state of ferment. With or without the patronage of Muslim dynasty, it was reasserting itself after a long period of quiescence. The principal exponents of Islamic reform and revival were a number of militant scholars whose reputation for intellectual resourcefulness, piety and religious devotion went beyond the confines of their own localities. The earliest of these reforming pioneers was *Shaykh* Muhammad Shāh b. Muhammad (fl. c. 1743-1806) of Albukko in Qallu who waged periodic campaigns against the neighbouring Christian villages and the Oromo of Borāna with a view to converting them to Islam.¹² The second prominent figure in the revival of Islam in Wällo was *al-Hāj* Bushrā Ay Muhammad of Gäta (d. 1863)¹³ whose lifelong struggle against nominal Islam earned him widespread recognition as an uncompromising defender of Orthodoxy.¹⁴

The immediate predecessors and contemporaries of *Shaykh* Talha from whom he drew much inspiration included *Shaykh* Husayn Jibril (d. 1915)¹⁵ of Wärra Himāno in whose poetry and claim to clairvoyance he found a weapon for waging a passive resistance to Yohannes's policy of mass conversion of the Wällo Muslims, and *Shaykh* 'Alī Adam who fought some local detachments of Yohannes's army in one of which he lost his life.¹⁶ Further afield, in northwestern Šāwa and in Hadya, Hasan Wādajo of Dārra and Hasan Injamo of Qābbénna instigated in 1878 major revolts using Islam as a rallying point.¹⁷

Talha's Family and Educational Background

According to Conti Rossini, *Shaykh* Talha¹⁸ b. Ja'far b. Yūsuf was born a "little after 1850" ("poco dopo 1850")¹⁹ at Doddota in the district of Dāwwāy, south Wällo.

Doddota was a major centre of local pilgrimage where the shrine of his illustrious and saintly grandfather,²⁰ *Shaykh Yūsuf Qanqé alias Abā Asiyya* (d. 1835/36), was located. *Shaykh Yūsuf* is remembered as a man who possessed *karāma* (power of working miracles). Traditions assert that he had a number of mosques built at various places with the help of supernatural forces.²¹

Oral informants and the editor of the published religious manual composed by *Shaykh Talha* believe that Talha was actually born at the village of Aréra Fura in Argobba in eastern Qallu.²² He acquired the spirit of devotion and piety from his religious training, while his later militancy was a response to the hardship and persecution to which the Muslim community in Wällo was being subjected in the 1880s. There is a tradition that Abā Asiyya had made a prophecy about the birth of Talha and his struggle for the cause of Islam. The same tradition asserts that although Abā Asiyya had other sons older than Ja'far, Talha's father, he arranged for his marriage in order to fulfill the prophecy.²³

Shaykh Talha received his early Islamic education in various parts of Wällo.²⁴ Although he is believed to have been taught by several clerics, only one is remembered by name: *al-Hāj Bashir* of Čanno who instructed him in Qur'ānic exegesis at the village of Arraf Lebbé.²⁵

The most notable consequence of his intensive training as a religious scholar - and his most enduring legacy - was his effective use of Amharic in the teaching of the fundamentals of Islam²⁶ and in the composition of several manuals on theology and other related fields.

Shaykh Talha's only published work, *Tawhid enna Fiqh* (Theology and Law), clearly reveals his ardent desire to disseminate the basic doctrines of Islam among ordinary Amharic-speaking Muslims through the medium of simple but coherent Amharic poetry although, as Drewes rightly observed, it is full of Arabic loanwords,²⁷ and the strong Arabic influence is evident in the very title of the work itself. The *shaykh's* attempt at bridging the vast gulf between the scholarly erudition of the local 'ulamā²⁸ and the apparently superficial knowledge that Muslim commoners had about their religion, constitutes a significant contribution to the cultivation and development of Islam.²⁹

The work - originally entitled *Hadiyyat al-Subyān* (Gift to the Youth) or *Tuhfat al-Ikhwān* (Gift to the Brethren) - is divided into various sections which include the "Six Pillars of Faith" (*Arkān al-Imān*), the "Five Pillars of Islam", ritual cleanliness, the obligatory and voluntary prayers, alms-giving, fasting, pilgrimage and penitence. These topics are discussed in a dramatic and forceful manner. This handy and useful religious manual introduces the reader to Islam as an integrated system of belief and practices in a way that a formal oral preaching in a mosque or instruction at school cannot. The description of doctrine and rituals is lucid and incisive.³⁰

A related contribution of *Shaykh Talha*, especially in the literary field, is his use of the Arabic script in the writing of his works in Amharic. Such a literary genre is styled locally 'Ajāmī (lit. = non-Arabic) and is widespread throughout Muslim Wällo.³¹ It is possible that such type of local literature flourished because of lack of access to Amharic written literature and its identification with Christian culture.³²

Perhaps the most monumental of Talha's works is the Prophet Muhammad's biography in four volumes of manuscript. This work deals with the Prophet's life and career until his death. It was written, as usual, in Amharic with Arabic characters, and in verse.³³ A full-fledged Amharic translation of the Qur'ān is also attributed to *Shaykh* Talha.³⁴

To what extent, if at all, did his descent from a family noted for its piety and influence shape *Shaykh* Talha's character? What was the nature of his relationship with his teachers and fellow students? On these vital questions, which are crucial for an understanding of his later life, oral traditions are silent, although an informant asserted that his grandfather's reputation as a saint had no influence over Talha.³⁵ It is, however, likely that his descent from a holy family might have led him to perceive himself not only as an active preacher but also as a man with a religious mission to fulfill. This in turn might have bolstered his confidence in his potential capacity as a charismatic leader who demanded unswerving loyalty from his followers. Whether he acquired these qualities from his contemporaries or from his reading is difficult to establish at the present state of our knowledge. However, a careful examination of the contents of his writings and a close study of his later career reveal a strong tendency on his part to glorify and emulate the early heroes of Islam, and his preoccupation with a perpetual struggle against complacency and indifference to moral and religious laxity.

Certain anecdotes in the life of *Shaykh* Talha as related by informants strongly suggest that his militancy had not diminished even by the time that his active life as a warrior was drawing to a close, after 1896.³⁶ This shows that he had developed such a character in his early days as a student and teacher. But it appears that this spirit of defiance and militancy had also been tempered by his religious devotion and scholarly pursuits until 1878 when Emperor Yohannes IV decreed the conversion of the Wällo Muslims to Christianity.

Shaykh Talha's strict adherence to the precepts of Islamic orthodoxy is reflected both in his teaching and writings. An informant who knew him in Čarčar relates that one of the reasons why the *shaykh* preferred to spend the rest of his life in eastern Ethiopia, amongst people who knew little about him, was his indignation against his becoming an object of popular veneration while he was in Wällo, and the fear that after his death, his tomb would be turned into a shrine and a place of ritual sacrifice.³⁷ The following couplets epitomize his condemnation of all manifestations of popular belief and transgression of the divine law:

በሠላሳ ገዝቶ መታብር ተግረድ፤
 ደስ ያሰኘ ነበር ለሠላሳ ዘመድ
 ለዲሳፍ ቢታረድ ለኛ መሐመድ
 መብከቱ እንደሆነ አይተር ባይሆን ለዋሒድ

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Here, *Shaykh* Talha is denouncing the traditional practice of slaying animals during burial ceremonies or even in the names of the Prophets 'Isā and Muhammad, other than for the One God.

Shaykh Talha also urged those around him to relate to their children accounts of the glory and life of the Prophet and of his pious and heroic companions in order to instill in their minds a sense of confidence and pride in their faith, and to inculcate courage and perseverance.³⁹

The Period of Struggle

The most eventful period in the life and career of *Shaykh* Talha spans the reigns of Emperor Yohannes and Menilek II (r. 1889-1913). Following the Council of Boru Méda in May/June 1878, Yohannes sent in October Christian clerics and troops to implement the policy of conversion of the Wällo Muslims by compelling them to build churches, pay tithes to the Church⁴⁰ and quarter imperial troops.⁴¹

According to local and foreign sources, *Shaykh* Talha organized his first major revolt in mid-1884.⁴² However, as will be discussed below, his reconciliation with Menilek took place after the Battle of Adwa,⁴³ by which time *Shaykh* Talha had waged an armed struggle for seventeen years, on which there is consensus among all informants.⁴⁴ Hence, his first rebellion can be dated between 1879 and 1880.

Shaykh Talha is believed to have escaped from the massacre of a large number of Muslims in the hands of the forces of Yohannes at Bäcké in Qallu in 1298 A.H./1880-81 A.D.⁴⁵ These Muslims had preferred death to abjuration of their faith. *Shaykh* Talha then established his base in his home district of Argobba in eastern Qallu,⁴⁶ from where he declared an all-out *jihād*.⁴⁷ That the Wällo Muslim revolt was neither an isolated phenomenon nor the earliest uprising can be seen if one keeps in mind the fact that from April to July 1878, a revolt under the leadership of Hasan Wādajo was raging in Dārra. Yohannes led an unsuccessful campaign against Hasan although he obtained considerable booty. In June 1878 Hasan succeeded in defeating the forces sent by Yohannes and Menilek led, respectively, by Mika'él and Mäsāša.⁴⁸

The principal causes for the armed insurrections which engulfed eastern Wällo in the early 1880s were, firstly, the attempts of Yohannes and his vassals to impose the Christian faith on the Muslim population of Wällo; secondly, the heavy economic burden which local Muslims were made to bear by maintaining a Christian clerical, administrative and military class through their labour and tribute; and, thirdly, the severity and ruthlessness with which the policy of conversion was carried out - all of which sparked off a spontaneous and widespread popular revulsion and reaction. This was articulated and channelled into a religio-political opposition led by the local Muslim religious notables and political leaders. Islam was thus not merely a rallying point of such uprisings: it was itself the motive force behind them.

The period from 1880-81 to 1884 was one of organization of the movement led by *Shaykh* Talha and of recruitment of followers. In order to consolidate his power before proclaiming the 1884 revolt, *Shaykh* Talha employed three strategies: firstly, appealing to the religious sentiment of the ordinary people, mainly of eastern Qallu; secondly, establishing contact with disgruntled elements of the local aristocracy; and,

thirdly, mobilizing support for his cause among the '*ulamā*' and *balabbat* of Albukko, Qallu and Reqqé who are believed to have sworn a formal oath of allegiance to him.⁴⁹ It is perhaps after this development that he established his earliest relations with, and sought assistance from, the Mahdists,⁵⁰ although his collusion with them came later. *Shaykh* Talha was able, through his organizing skill and power of persuasion, to build a small but formidable striking force which operated in the lowlands of Qallu and Gärfä. This prompted Yohannes and Menilek to launch an expedition from Tähulädäré towards the frontier of Adal in March 1880.⁵¹ A year later, another joint campaign was organized and led by the two potentates⁵² to suppress a religiously - inspired uprising. The revolts in Wällo continued throughout the next two years. According to Gäbrä Sellasé, Menilek's chronicler:

"....since the Wällo Muslims had taken refuge in Qallu, Argobba and Gärfä, they [Yohannes and Menilek] issued a proclamation of mobilization of the army for a campaign aimed at annihilating all the Muslims. On 19th *Hedar* [28 October 1882], they left Boru Méda on an expedition to Argobba and Qallu and, having destroyed the Muslims as far as Däwwé, they returned to Boru Méda on 19th *Terr* [26 January 1883]."⁵³

This is confirmed by a local tradition: on 24 Muharram 1300 (5 December 1882), an expedition to southeastern Qallu in order to put down a Muslim uprising led to the death of a number of '*ulamā*', including *Shaykh* Abboyyé, *Shaykh* Talha's paternal uncle.⁵⁴

Although the role of *Shaykh* Talha in these uprisings cannot be clearly established, he was certainly the leading figure in the revolt which broke out in Argobba in 1884. The chronicler relates that because the Argobba Muslims, under the leadership of *Shaykh* Talha - whom he disparagingly calls a *fuqra* (sorcerer) - had refused to pay tributes, Yohannes launched a campaign to, and ravaged, the area although the rebels could not be apprehended.⁵⁵

The early followers of *Shaykh* Talha, after the Bäcké massacre, were the Muslim peasants and semi-nomads of the peripheral districts of eastern Wällo.⁵⁶ Later on, he recruited the Rayya and Azäbo. This occurred after his escape from a Christian punitive expedition which had inflicted a heavy defeat on the Muslim forces at Mänäkusé in Qallu in 1884.⁵⁷

Both oral and written sources emphasize the diversity of the *shaykh*'s followers. They included people from Argobba, Čälläqa, Gedom, and Ifat,⁵⁸ the Dänakil of Awsa and the Azäbo Oromo.⁵⁹

The available evidence - both oral and documentary - does not throw any light on the organization and size of *Shaykh* Talha's followers in times of peace. Certainly he had a fair number of disciples permanently attached to him while receiving religious training under him. They maintained themselves by charities from well-to-do cultivators and traders as did other Muslim students in the rural areas.⁶⁰ As for *Shaykh* Talha himself, he depended on the generosity of pious Muslims and the revenue from land granted to him by the local chiefs.⁶¹ Another source of income was war booty (*ghanīma*).⁶²

Relations between *Shaykh* Talha and his followers were strained from time to time. The latter, especially those from eastern Wällo, were later found to be untrustworthy and fickle in their loyalty to him. Some, including his Qur'ān teacher and even his own uncle, had conspired against him. There were basically two reasons given by informants for the plot. Firstly, the general resentment against the devastating campaigns led by the Christian rulers caused tremendous economic hardship and destruction of life. The conspirators blamed *Shaykh* Talha for the prevailing predicaments. Secondly, they suspected that behind Talha's religious fervour, there was a political motive. His growing popularity had also aroused the jealousy of some of the local 'ulamā'. Another source of conflict between *Shaykh* Talha and some of his followers was the issue of distribution of booty and what he considered to be their greediness, which cast doubt on the degree of their religious commitment.⁶³

This internal opposition to *Shaykh* Talha was dealt with harshly by a daring night ambush which he led against the unsuspecting rebels - including his former Qur'ān teacher and his own uncle - as they were gathered for prayer.⁶⁴ They were put to the sword except some who managed to escape. When *Shaykh* Talha was later asked if he regretted the violent way in which he eliminated his adversaries, and whether God would ever forgive him for his action, he is believed to have replied that God would, on the contrary, reprimand him for not exterminating them to the last man!⁶⁵ This incident is very revealing of his uncompromising attitude towards what he believed to be recalcitrants and renegades.

A major revolt was proclaimed by *Shaykh* Talha in July 1884.⁶⁶ His base of military operations was Gärfä from where he made known his intention of waging a *jihād* against the Christian forces. In November, Menilek left Boru Méda on a punitive campaign but Talha fled to the lowlands. Menilek returned to his camp having ravaged Qallu, Gärfä and Wärrä Babbo. Although the uprising coincided with the absence of *Ras* Mika'él who had gone to the north to attend the signing of the Hewett Treaty at Adwa,⁶⁷ Talha could not face Menilek's superior forces and risk defeat and capture. Such a recurrent retreat and elusiveness was characteristic of Talha's tactics throughout the period of his armed struggle.

The second major Muslim revolt in Wällo took place in November 1885 in which two representatives of the Wärrä Himāno ruling class - Mästayät and Abba Jäbäl - took part.⁶⁸ It is most probable that *Shaykh* Talha was also an active leader of this revolt, although some writers say that he had fled to the Sudan in 1885.⁶⁹ The Italian Commissioner at Assab for 1895/96, Giannini, wrote that when in late 1885, Yohannes ravaged Gärfä and the surrounding districts in Awsa, Talha intercepted some columns and inflicted heavy losses on them,⁷⁰ for which the Sultan of Awsa was grateful. Talha's response to the Yohannes-Menilek offensives was not always a retreat to the eastern lowlands. He also launched offensive operations by burning down churches which the local Muslims had been compelled to build and by harassing the Christian priests we had been sent to instruct the new converts.⁷¹ He led destructive raids against Yohannes's commanders of the local regiments. During one such raid he scored a decisive victory over the column led by a certain *Bäjerwänd* Näwté. The following poem portrays the outcome of the battle fought at Kilkillo in Däwwäy and highlights the role of *Shaykh* Talha:

በጅር ወንድ ነውጠን ከሰ ቢታየው፤
 ጦላሐ ጀሪረ በጥብብ ቶየው፤
 ኪላኪሉ ጦላካ ጥጥን አሳየው፤
 ህሉጥ ጦስክሯላ እንደበራየው።

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So serious was the revolt of 1885/86 that both Yohannes and Menilek ravaged Reqqé, Argobba and Gärfä.⁷³ The joint punitive campaign lasted three months until January 1886⁷⁴ and was accompanied by unprecedented destruction of life and property.⁷⁵

Talha's Contacts with the Sultan of Awsa, the Mahdists & the Italians

Some oral informants deny Talha's dealings with, and the assistance he sought and sometimes received from, external elements. Others, while admitting the existence of such contacts, do not provide reliable and detailed information on this important aspect of *Shaykh* Talha's career.⁷⁶ However, some written sources throw considerable light on the subject.

Because Talha's home district of Argobba and his base in Gärfä were geographically contiguous to Awsa, it is natural that Talha should turn to the hereditary ruler of Awsa at the time, Sultan Anfari, for sympathy and material assistance for the prosecution of his armed struggle. According to an oral source, Talha received from Anfari a total of 500 muskets.⁷⁷ This appears to be a clearly exaggerated figure. The only recorded assistance that Talha obtained from the sultan included 2,000 thalers, 20 guns and a large herd of cattle, for the part he played in the episode of 1885.⁷⁸

A report by *Khalīfa* 'Abdallāhi's emissary to Menilek suggests an alliance between the *Khalīfa* and Anfari, and the establishment of a friendly relationship between the latter and "Esh Sheikh Tolha El Jabarti." The emissary added that Talha found it difficult to maintain his relationship with Anfari after the sultan's dealings with the Italians.⁷⁹

The man who played an important role in the establishment of a close relationship between Anfari and Talha was 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Yūsuf, an Adal from Tajura,⁸⁰ a supplier of arms to Anfari,⁸¹ and the Italian agent in the court of Anfari.⁸²

It seems that the Anfari-Talha alliance did not survive long partly because Anfari's assistance to Talha was either not forthcoming or insufficient after 1886. Therefore, Talha travelled to Wälqayet from where established contact and friendly relations with the *Khalīfa*.⁸³ Unfortunately, there is no information to date on how and why he moved to Wälqayet. Nonetheless his sojourn there marked the beginning of a close relationship with the Mahdists which lasted until 1889.

The Christian writer, Asmé, suggests that the Muslim uprisings in Wällo were inspired by the Mahdists: he even calls Talha a "Därbuš".⁸⁴ Such a view overlooks the underlying causes of the Muslim revolts in Wällo from 1884 to 1885,⁸⁵ which predate the outbreak of the Mahdiyya itself.

It is quite possible that *Shaykh* Talha, after establishing himself in Wälqayet, had sent his own envoys to Omdurman,⁸⁶ or had gone there himself, to conclude a loose alliance with the *Khalīfa* expecting some assistance in return.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, the period from 1886 to 1889 is rather obscure. Although various sources mention that Talha had taken part in the sacking of Gondär by the Mahdist forces on 23 January 1888,⁸⁸ and in the subsequent battle at Mätämma on 7 March 1889,⁸⁹ they do not provide any details on his role in the course of the actual fighting. It is known that Abū 'Anja took some Ethiopian Muslims with him to Omdurman so that they would submit to the Mahdiyya,⁹⁰ but there is no indication in our sources that *Shaykh* Talha was one of them.

According to some writers, Talha's relations with the Mahdists deteriorated because he was dissatisfied with the "maladministration" of the Mahdists.⁹¹ A more plausible explanation for the strained relations could be that the Mahdists had failed to assist Talha with arms. Whatever the real reason for Talha's decision to abandon them might have been, he returned to Gärfä in 1890 and declared a major revolt on his own. It was in order to suppress this revolt that Empress Taytu (1851-1918) sent a force led by a certain *Qāññazmač* Brellé in February 1890 while Emperor Menilek was in Tegräy.⁹² The force was equipped with 700 muskets. However, most of the sources are silent on the outcome of the expedition. Fekadu says that Talha was defeated in Gärfä and fled to Awsä.⁹³ But the fact that Yohannes and Menilek spent the Easter of 1890 in Adamé, Qallu⁹⁴ suggests that their presence was needed to quell the revolt.

Talha's contacts with the Italians were the consequence of the initiative of the Italian agents and part of their general political strategy to exploit local Muslim dissidence in order to undermine Menilek's capacity in meeting the challenge of Italian expansion. Thus Captain Persico and his successor, Giannini, were sent to make contact with Anfari, Talha and *Ras* Mika'él in 1894.⁹⁵ In September 1895 Talha met the two Italian agents at "Teru on the Gollima River" and, according to their own report, he "swore allegiance to Italy" ("giurò fedeltà all' Italia").⁹⁶ The Italians also counted on his hostility towards the Mahdists following his rupture with them after 1889.⁹⁷ As an inducement he received substantial military assistance in order to instigate an anti-Menilek and a pro-Italian rising among the Rayya and Azäbo, and other communities of the lowlands. Talha was also instructed to occupy Ašängé for the Italians before the army under Menilek reached the area.⁹⁸ This was the prelude to the Battle of Amba Alagé of 7 December 1895.

Shaykh Talha was supposed to deploy his forces of 300-350 men armed with rifles, although, according to Berkeley, the Italians had expected him to mobilize 800 men.⁹⁹ But *Shaykh* Talha apparently defected at the outbreak of the fighting.¹⁰⁰ Italian sources explain his defection in terms which imply cowardice,¹⁰¹ while Berkeley wrote that Talha's contingent was put to flight by *Ras* Alula.¹⁰²

The defection of *Shaykh* Talha is important in two ways: firstly, it shows that whatever legitimate grievances he might have had against Menilek, Talha abandoned the Italians at the crucial moment, and, secondly, his defection contributed to the disillusionment of the Italians who tried and partially succeeded in exploiting internal contradictions among Ethiopians to fulfill their own political ambitions.¹⁰³ More importantly, it boosted the morale of the Ethiopians by spreading the news of the Italian disaster at Amba Alagé.¹⁰⁴ *Shaykh* Talha's defection also reveals the naiveté of the Europeans of the nineteenth century in assuming that their African allies would always abide by their agreements regardless of their own interests and priorities. *Shaykh* Talha withdrew from the military confrontation for his own specific reasons.

After his crushing victory over the Italians at Adwa in 1896, Menilek sent an expedition to Ifat against the forces of *Shaykh* Talha who was apparently still at the head of an armed rebellion in the area. Realizing the futility of resisting the large and well-equipped imperial forces, *Shaykh* Talha consulted his followers who proposed a speedy retreat to the lowlands. However, in order to delude Menilek's troops into thinking that Talha possessed a large army, he came up with a stratagem to minimize his losses through an untimely confrontation. He ordered each of his warriors to make fire at ten different places all around his camp. When Menilek's troops saw from a distance the large fire in Talha's camp, they believed that he was indeed accompanied by a formidable force, and postponed attacking him overnight. When they approached the camp the following day, they found to their dismay only the ashes of burnt-out sticks of firewood scattered all over the camp.¹⁰⁵ This episode effectively marked the end of the militant phase in Talha's turbulent life as a warrior.

The Final Phase in Talha's Career

The reconciliation between Menilek and Talha was arranged by *Shaykh* Nureyyé 'Umar of Yäjjū who is believed to have successfully treated Menilek for some illness.¹⁰⁶ The Emperor asked *Shaykh* Nureyyé how he could reward him whereupon the *shaykh* replied that he would feel more than sufficiently compensated if Menilek pardoned *Shaykh* Talha. Accordingly, a formal ceremony of reconciliation took place in the imperial court. My respectable informant, the late *al-Hāj* Muhammad Thānī Ḥabīb Bashīr (1914-1989), told me in the summer of 1988 that he had seen a copy of Menilek's sealed letter (in the possession of one of Talha's relatives) to *Shaykh* Nureyyé thanking him for arranging the reconciliation with Talha. Talha subsequently received land in Rasa, Ifat.¹⁰⁷ The two events took place in 1896/97.¹⁰⁸

Oral evidence has not been helpful in establishing the duration of Talha's stay in Ifat following this event. However, Conti Rossini - who is our only source on this important period of Talha's life - provides a number of facts and episodes but, regrettably, few explanations, which would enable us to determine how long and in what capacity Talha spent his last years, especially in Harärgé. Conti Rossini says that after his reconciliation with Menilek, Talha was entrusted to the care of *Azzaʿ* Wäldä Sadeq, governor of the neighbouring district of Ankobär, from whom he received a fief in Čänno which he retained until after the death of Menilek.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, Talha must have stayed in Ifat from 1896 to 1914. Zewde's statement that Talha "... was an active proponent of Islam in Wello up to 1916"¹¹⁰ makes his stay longer by two years. An informant says that while in Ifat, Talha had his land cultivated the produce of which he distributed among the needy.¹¹¹

According to Conti Rossini, Talha acted as one of Menilek's intermediaries in his contacts with the Dervishes directed against the Italians and the English.¹¹² This entirely new role of *Shaykh* Talha, of which informants are unaware, is rather too early after the reconciliation, as Conti Rossini himself noted.¹¹³ Could it be that Talha was a member of one of the several missions which Menilek sent to Omdurman after the Battle of Adwa, to which Holt makes a clear reference?¹¹⁴

As *Shaykh* Talha grew older, he felt more than ever before the need to settle down after nearly two decades of hectic life as a dissident. Why did he prefer to settle in Čärčär? One reason was already suggested above by informants: while in Wällo, he had become a popular figure and an object of veneration. He resented this since it conflicted with his strict adherence to orthodoxy.¹¹⁵ An informant said that Talha moved to Čärčär because of the presence of a large Muslim community among whom he could work and live.¹¹⁶ Another and more plausible reason must have had to do with his appointment as governor of Wäddéssa.

Conti Rossini wrote that in the time of Iyyasu, with whom *Shaykh* Talha was on good terms,¹¹⁷ he was appointed governor of Wäddéssa in Čärčär, was later summoned to Harär and sent by Iyyasu to Somalia to launch propaganda work against Europeans,¹¹⁸ possibly to renew the relationship with the Somali reformer, Muhammad 'Abdille Hasan (1864-1920) which "... reached its climax under Lij Iyasu..."¹¹⁹ Iyyasu's dynamism and sympathy for Islam in order to bring about the integration of the Muslim elements into the Ethiopian Empire must have appealed to *Shaykh* Talha and provided him with a further opportunity for working for the cause of Islam. This probably explains, more than anything else, his move to Čärčär.

Informants say that in Čärčär, *Shaykh* Talha also led a quiet life of meditation and teaching - although this conflicts with the available written material which, as noted above, clearly suggests an active and eventful life.

After the fall of Iyyasu in 1916, Talha was arrested and detained for a number of years.¹²⁰ He later regained his freedom and was reinstated as governor of Wäddéssa where he spent his last years and suffered from the effects of old age and poor health.¹²¹

The exact year of his death is controversial. According to one oral informant, Talha died in 1354 A.H./1935,¹²² while others say he died in 1355 A.H./1936, just before the Italian invasion.¹²³ He was buried at a place called Goro in Čärčär.¹²⁴

Shaykh Talha was survived by a number of sons and daughters. One of his sons, Mann al-Karīm, still resides in Mi'ésso.¹²⁵

NOTES

1. Informants: *Shaykh al-Hāj* Muhammad Tāj al-Dīn Ahmad and *Shaykh* Muzaffar Bahru (interviewed in Kombolča on 29 and 30 April 1982 respectively).
2. Informant: *Shaykh* Muhammad Tāj al-Dīn.
3. Hussein Ahmed, 1985. "Clerics, Traders and Chiefs: A Historical Study of Islam in Wallo (Ethiopia), with Special Emphasis on the Nineteenth Century" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Birmingham), pp. 89-94.
4. Weld Blundell, H., 1922. *The Royal Chronicle of Abyssinia 1769-1840*. Cambridge; The University Press, p. 511. One scholar has been sceptical about the tradition, largely on etymological grounds: Trimingham, J. Spencer, 1952. *Islam in Ethiopia* 2nd impression. London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., p. 193, n.1.
5. Hussein, "Clerics, Traders...", p.119.
6. *Ibid.*, Chapter V, pp. 252-288.
7. Trimingham, *op.cit.*, p. 234; *idem*, 1971. *The Sufi Orders in Islam*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 105.
8. Abir, Mordechai, 1964. "Trade and Politics in the Ethiopian Region 1830-1855" (Ph.D. thesis, University of London), pp. 8-12.
9. Abbadie, Arnauld d', 1880. *Douze ans de séjour dans la Haute-Ethiopie (Abyssinie)*. Jeanne-Marie Allier ed. Vatican, II, p. 200; Combes, E. and Tamisier, M., 1838. *Voyage en Abyssinie, dans les provinces du Tigré, du Samen et de l'Amhara*. Paris, II, pp. 300-301.
10. Fekadu Begna, 1972. "A Tentative History of Wallo 1855-1908" (B.A. thesis, Addis Ababa University), pp. 5,9,41.
11. Asnake Ali, 1983. "Aspects of the Political History of Wallo: 1872-1916" (M.A. thesis, Addis Ababa University), pp. 22, 24-27, 34; Fekadu, *op.cit.*, pp. 43, 46. See also below, p.17.
12. On his life and achievements, see Hussein, "Clerics, Traders...", pp. 222-231.
13. Cf. Asnake, *op.cit.*, p. 31 where *Shaykh* Bushrā's death is wrongly dated 1871.
14. See Hussein, *op.cit.*, pp. 235-249.
15. Asnake, *op.cit.*, pp. 28-31. On *Shaykh* Husayn, see also Boggalä Täfäri, 1972 E.C. "Shaykh Husayn and His Poems" (in Amharic). (B.A. thesis, Addis Ababa University).
16. Hussein, *op.cit.*, pp. 347-349; Fekadu, *op.cit.*, p.44.
17. Cerulli, Enrico, 1922. *The Folk-Literature of the Galla of Southern Abyssinia*. Vol. III. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard African Studies, pp. 22-23, 162-164. On the influence of the Wällo Muslims on Injamo, see Worku Nida, 1984. "The Revivalist Movement of Hassan Enjamo" (B.A. thesis, A.A. University), especially pp. 49, 53, 57-58.

18. The name Talha has undergone a high degree of corruption perhaps unmatched by any other Ethiopian Muslim name. Thus we have: "Thala" in Berkeley, G.F.-H., 1902. *The Campaign of Adowa and the Rise of Menelik*. Westminster: Archibald Constable & Co. Ltd., pp. 114 ff.; "Toliha" in Gäbrä Sellasé. "Chronicle of Säwa". Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, Manuscripts Ethiopiens, Mondon 74, f. 83b; "Tola" in Prouty, Chris and Rosenfeld, Eugene, 1981. *Historical Dictionary of Ethiopia*, No. 32, African Historical Dictionaries. London: The Scarecrow Press, pp. 172-173; "Tohla" in Prouty, Chris, 1986. *Empress Taytu and Menilek II: Ethiopia 1883-1910*. London: Ravens Educational & Development Services and Trenton, N.J: The Red Sea Press, p. 143 and Rosenfeld, Chris Prouty, 1976. *A Chronology of Menilek II of Ethiopia 1884-1913*. East Lansing: Michigan State University, p. 106; and "Tol'ā" in Asmä Giyorgis Gäbrä Mäsih. "Yä Galla Tarik". (Institute of Ethiopian Studies, MS. No. 380a), p.63.
19. Conti Rossini, Carlo, 1935. *Italia ed Etiopia dal Trattato d'Uccialli alla Battaglia di Adua*. Roma: Istituto per l'Oriente, Appendix VIII, p.468.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Informant: *Shaykh* Muhammad Tayyib (Addis Ababa, 10 September 1989).
22. Informants: *al-Hāḥj* Muhammad Wälé Ahmad (Addis Ababa, 11 July 1987); *Shaykh* Muhammad Tayyib (A.A., 13 July 1987), and others cited below; Sayyid Ibrāhīm (ed.), 1958/59. *Tawhīd enna Fiqh*. 1st edn., Addis Ababa: Commercial Printing Press, p. 1. Conti Rossini's assertion in *op.cit.*, p. 160 that Talha was an Oromo and a distant kinsman of Ras Mika'él is not confirmed by oral sources.
23. Informants: *Shaykh* 'Alī Yūsuf (Bati, 21 July 1983); *al-Hāḥj* 'Alī Muhammad (A.A., 14 July 1987).
24. Caulk, R.A., 1972. "Religion and the State in Nineteenth Century Ethiopia". *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, X, 1, p.33. According to Conti Rossini, *op.cit.*, p.468, Talha taught at Mäyti in Aréra on the Reqqé-Qallu frontier.
25. Informant: *Shaykh* Sayyid Ahmad Ibrāhīm (A.A., 17 July 1987).
26. Driewes, A.J., 1976. *Classical Arabic in Central Ethiopia*, 7, Oosters Genootschap in Nederland. Leiden, p. 186.
27. *Ibid.*
28. On Muslim education, especially in Wällo, see Hussein Ahmed, 1988. "Traditional Muslim Education in Wallo." In *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Ethiopian Studies* Vol.3. Moscow: USSR Academy of Sciences and Africa Institute, pp. 94-106.
29. On a similar work composed in Harär and entitled *Kitab al-Farā'id* (Book of Obligations), see Cerulli, Enrico, 1936. *La Lingua e la Storia di Harar*. Roma: Istituto per l'Oriente.
30. Some of the Amharic verses collected and published by the late Professor Enrico Cerulli under the title "Canti Amarici dei Musulmani di Abissinia" in his *magnum opus islamicus*, 1971, *L'Islam di ieri e di oggi*. Roma: Istituto per l'Oriente, pp. 245-256, are strikingly similar to those composed by *Shaykh* Talha in both their literary features and didactic style of narration. It is quite possible that some of them can be attributed to *Shaykh* Talha. Cerulli's silence on the source or authorship of these religious poems remains an enigma.
31. Hussein Ahmed, 1988. "Introducing an Arabic Hagiography from Wällo." In Taddese Beyene, ed. *Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 1. Huntingdon, Cambs.: ELM Publications, pp. 185-197.
32. Cf. Enbaqom, *Anqasa Amin (La Porte de la Foi)*, van Donzel, E.J. trans/ed., 1969. Leiden: E.J. Brill.

33. It is entitled *Siyar Rasūl Allāh*. I saw a copy made from a version based on the original. It is in the possession of informant cited in n.25.
34. Informant: *Shaykh* 'Abd al-Karīm Muhammad Nūr (A.A., 19 July 1987). *Shaykh* Talha also translated Arabic religious poems into Amharic: Conti Rossini, *op.cit.*, p. 468.
35. Informant: *Shaykh* Muhammad Tayyib.
36. See below, pp. 22-23
37. Informants: *al-Hāḡ* 'Alī, *Shaykh* Muzaffar and *Shaykh* Hasan *al-Hāḡ* Muhammad (A.A., 14 November 1988).
38. Informants: *al-Hāḡ* 'Alī. A couple of words in the first and last verses were slightly modified in order to keep their rhythm. Translation: "Instead of slaughtering at a grave [an ox] bought for thirty [thalers], it is more pleasing [to give the money] to thirty relatives; even if one slaughtered in honour of Isā and our [Prophet] Muhammad, it would be as if one ate a dead animal, unless [it was sacrificed] for the one [God]."
39. *Idem*.
40. Rosenfeld, *Chronology*, p.80.
41. Zewde Gabre-Sellassie, 1975. *Yohannes IV of Ethiopia: A Political Biography*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 195.
42. "Chronicle of Šäwa", f. 83b; Asmä Giyorgis, "Yä Galla Tarik", p. 63; Prouty and Rosenfeld, *Historical Dictionary*, p. 172; Zewde, *op. cit.*, pp. 196, 292.
43. Conti Rossini, *op.cit.*, p. 469.
44. Informants: *Shaykh* Sayyid Ahmad Ibrāhīm, *Shaykh* Muhammad Awwal (A.A., 8 June 1988), and others.
45. About 20,000 men lost their lives at Bakké. Informant: *Shaykh* Muhammad Tāj al-Dīn (Kombolča, 4 April 1982). See also Conti Rossini, *op.cit.*, p. 468.
46. Asnake, *op. cit.*, p.33.
47. Conti Rossini, *op. cit.*, p. 469.
48. Rosenfeld, *op. cit.*, p.79.
49. Informant: *Shaykh* Muzaffar.
50. *Idem*.
51. "Chronicle of Šäwa", f. 63a; Chaîne, M., 1913. "Histoire du Règne de Iohannes IV Roi d'Ethiopie (1868-1889)." *Revue Sémitique d'Epigraphie et d' Histoire Ancienne*, p.186 (French text), p. 187 (Ge'ez text); Rosenfeld, *op. cit.*, p.80.
52. Rosenfeld, *op. cit.*, p. 91.
53. "Chronicle of Šäwa", f. 78b.
54. Informant: *Shaykh* Muhammad Tāj al-Dīn.

55. "Chronicle of Šäwa", f. 83b-84a; Caulk, *op. cit.*, p.33.
56. Informant: *Shaykh* Muhammad Tāj al-Dīn.
57. Informant: *Shaykh* Hasan; "Chronicle of Šäwa", f. 84a.
58. Informant: *Shaykh* Muhammad Tayyib.
59. Berkeley, *op.cit.*, p. 114; Conti Rossini, *op. cit.*, p. 469.
60. Hussein, "Traditional Muslim Education....," p. 102.
61. Informants: *al-Hāj* 'Alī, *Shaykh* Sayyid Ahmad, *Shaykh* Muhammad Awwal and *Shaykh* Muhammad Tayyib.
62. Informants: *al-Hāj* Muhammad Wälé, *Shaykh* Muhammad Awwal.
63. Informant: *Shaykh* 'Abd al-Salām Surūr (Kombolča 18 February 1983). According to the Qur'ān, VIII: 41, a fifth of the booty is the share of Allah and the Prophet, i.e., the state. Muhammad Husayn Haykal in his *The Life of Muhammad* (Ismā'īl Rāgī A. al-Fārūqī, trans., 1976), pp. 232-233 wrote: "Most biographers, especially the earlier among them, believed that this verse was revealed after the battle of Badr [fought in 624] as well as after Muhammad's division of its booty. They hold that Muhammad had divided the booty in equal parts, giving to the fighter with a horse twice the amount he gave to the fighter on foot."
64. Various informants. Asnake, *op. cit.*, p.33 also gives the number of the conspirators - about thirty. He describes them as "collaborators of the Christian forces", and mentions the place where they were ambushed: Serté in Argobba. It has been difficult to establish the date of the episode.
65. Various informants.
66. Rosenfeld, *op.cit.*, p. 106; Asnake, *loc.cit.*; Prouty and Rosenfeld, *op.cit.*, p.46.
67. Zewde, *op.cit.*, p.196.
68. Asnake, *loc.cit.*
69. Zewde, *op.cit.*, pp. 196, 292; Rosenfeld, *op. cit.*, p.14; Prouty and Rosenfeld, *op.cit.*, p. 172.
70. Giannini, Carlo, 1943. "La Conquista Scioana dell' Aussa (Ricordi di Missione)". *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*, III, 1, p. 236.
71. Caulk, *op.cit.*, p.34.
72. Informant: *Shaykh* Muhammad Tāj al-Dīn. Translation: "When *Bäjerwänd Näwté* needed [a purgative of] *koso*, Talha Ja'far waited for him with a potion, and beat him soundly at the ford of Kilillo; Everyone testifies that he gave him a good thrashing!"
73. "Chronicle of Šäwa", f. 85a; Asnake *op.cit.*, p. 33; Fekadu, *op.cit.*, p.47.
74. Rosenfeld, *op.cit.*, p. 117.
75. Asnake *op.cit.*, pp. 33-34; Zaghi, Carlo, 1934. *La Spedizione Capucci e Cicognani in Abissinia (con lettere e documenti inediti)*. Rocca S. Casciano: Stabilimento Tipografico L. Cappelli, pp.19-22.

76. Perhaps the two possible reasons why some informants were unhelpful in this regard are, firstly, they did not seem to be aware of Talha's external relations and, secondly, they wanted to exonerate him from the charge of conspiring with foreign enemies.
77. Informant: *Shaykh* 'Abd al-Karīm.
78. See n. 70 above.
79. National Records Office, Khartoum, Mahdia 1/34, folder 16, pp. 143. ff.
80. Gäbrä Sellasé [Wäldä Arägay], 1966/67. *Tarikä Zāmān zā Dagmawī Menilek Negusā Nāgāst zā Ityopya* (Märs'ē Hazān Wäldä Qirqos *et.al.*, eds.). Addis Ababa: Artistic Printing Press Ltd., pp. 233, 236.
81. Zaghi, Carlo, 1935. "Il Diario inedito della spedizione Capucci e Cicognani all'Aussa nell 1885" *Bollettino della Reale Società Geografica Italiana*, VI, xii, p.12, n.1.
82. Conti Rossini, *op.cit.*, p. 160; Baratieri, O., [1899]. *Mémoires d'Afrique (1892-1896)*. Paris: Charles Delagrave/H. Charles-Lavauzelle, p.189.
83. Caulk, *op.cit.*, p.35.
84. Asmä Giyorgis, *op.cit.*, pp.63,71.
85. Caulk, *loc.cit.*
86. Informant: *al-Haj* Muhammad Wälé. See also Holt, P.M.,1970. *The Mahdist State in the Sudan 1881-1889*. 2nd edn. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 148: "On 14 Safar 1304 (12 November 1886) he [ʿAbdallāhi] wrote to Hayātu [b. Saʿīd, grandson of Muhammad Bello] telling him of the projected conquest of Egypt, and of the arrival of foreign visitors in Omdurman from India, Bukhārā, Arabia, Abyssiniā, and Tunis."
87. Conti Rossini, *op.cit.*, p. 468.
88. *Ibid.*, p. 469. See also del Boca, Angelo, 1985. *Gli Italiani in Africa Orientale, I, Dall'Unità alla marcia su Roma*, tomo primo. Roma: Editori Laterza, p. 523.
89. Giannini, *op.cit.*, p. 236; Asnake, *op.cit.*, p.131.
90. Ismāʿil ibn ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Kurdufāni, 1972. *Al-Tirāz al-Manqūsh bibushrā qatl Yūhannā malik al-Hubūsh*. Muhammad Ibrāhim Abū Salim and Muhammad Saʿid al-Qaddāl eds. Khartoum: University of Khartoum Press, p. 78.
91. Conti Rossini, *loc.cit.*; Asnake, *loc. cit.*; Giannini, *loc.cit.*
92. Gäbrä Sellasé, *Tarikä Zāmān...*, pp. 171-172; Fekadu, *op.cit.*, p.56.
93. Fekadu, *op.cit.*, pp. 56-57.
94. Gäbrä Sellasé, *op.cit.*, p.173.
95. Baratieri, *op.cit.*, pp. 189, 281.
96. Conti Rossini *op.cit.*, p. 160; Berkeley, *op.cit.*, pp. 91, 114.
97. Baratieri, *op.cit.*, p. 189.

98. Conti Rossini, *op.cit.*, pp. 160, 184, 188.
99. Berkeley, *op. cit.*, p.121. Conti Rossini, *op. cit.*, p. 192 says Talha had 340 guns. According to Baratieri, *op. cit.*, p. 281, under Toselli were *Ras Sebhat* of Agamé and *Däjjazmač* 'Alf of Enda Mähonni who had 350 guns, while Talha alone possessed an equal number of arms.
100. Zewde, *op. cit.*, p.292.
101. For instance, Conti Rossini, *op.cit.*, pp. 209, 469.
102. Berkeley, *op.cit.*, p. 137.
103. Prouty, *op.cit.*, p. 143.
104. Baratieri, *loc.cit.* Berkeley, *op. cit.*, p.142.
105. Various informants alluded to this incident. For a similar strategem employed by the Oromo in their attempt to overcome the resistance of the Käfa, see Tekalign Woldemariam, 1984. "Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Kingdom of Jimma (Ca. 1800-1935)" (M.A. thesis, A.A. University), p.34.
106. Conti Rossini, *op.cit.*, p. 469; Mahdia, 1/34, p. 143. This is confirmed by oral sources. See also Asnake, *op.cit.*, p. 131.
107. Informants: *Amīr* Ahmad Yūsuf (Šāwa Robi, 19 September 1983); *Shaykh* Muhammad Awwal; and *Shaykh* Sayyid Ahmad.
108. Conti Rossini, *loc.cit.*; Asnake, *loc.cit.*; and various informants.
109. Conti Rossini, *loc.cit.*
110. Zewde, *op.cit.*, p. 173.
111. Informant: *Shaykh* Sayyid Ahmad.
112. Conti Rossini, *loc.cit.*
113. *Ibid.*, p. 36, n.1.
114. Holt, *op.cit.*, pp. 216, 227, 229. Bairu wrongly dates the beginning of Talha's role as Menilek's emissary to the 1880s: Bairu Tafla (ed.), 1987. *Asma Giyorgis and His work: History of the Gālā and the Kingdom of Šawā*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GmbH, p. 753, n.983.
115. See above, p. /6
116. Informant: *al-Hāj* Muhammad Wälé.
117. Informant: *Shaykh* Hasan.
118. Conti Rossini, *loc.cit.*
119. Aleme Eshete, 1984. "A Page in the History of the Ogaden: Contact and Correspondence between Emperor Minilik and the Somali Mahdi Muhammad Abdullah Hassan (1907-1908)". In Sven Rubenson, (ed.). *Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*. Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies; Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies; East Lansing: African Studies Center, Michigan State University, p. 312. See also Aby Demissie, 1964.

"Lij Iyasu: a Perspective Study of His Short Reign" (B.A. thesis, University College of A.A.), p. 23; Bairu, *loc.cit.*

120. According to *Shaykh* Hasan, during the reign of Zäwditu, Talha was sentenced to death by the Šāwan nobility but was later pardoned by Tāfāri.
121. Conti Rossini, *loc.cit.* I hope to undertake a more complete follow-up study of the career of Talha in Čärčär than was attempted in this article.
122. Informant: *Shaykh* Muhammad Tayyib.
123. Informants: *Shaykh* Muhammad Tāj al-Dīn and *al-Hāj* Muhammad Wälé.
124. Informants: *Shaykh* Muhammad Tāj al-Dīn and *al-Hāj* 'Alī.
125. Informant: *Shaykh* Muhammad Tayyib.